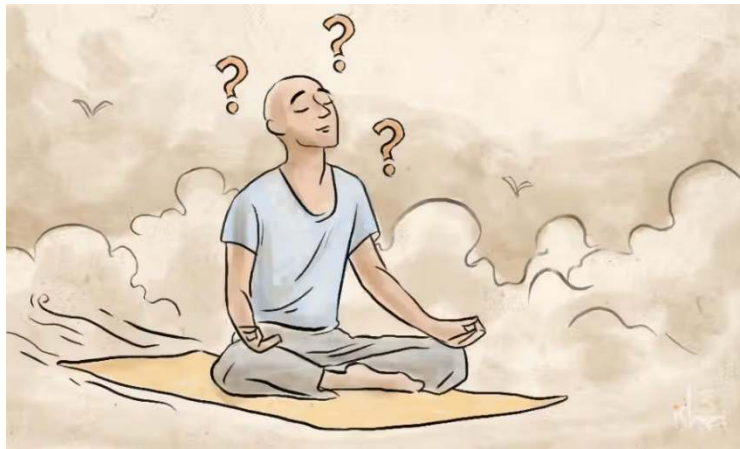


Meditation Exposed



Confusion About Meditation

Over the course of the last year I have conducted a local meditation class. I have noticed the palpable confusion, misinformation, and wrong views people have about meditation. Hands-down, the most common issue facing many people who had attended a few classes, but did not return, was due to a wrong view of meditation. Most people equate the practice of meditation with already incorrect concepts of Buddha and his teachings. Where does the misconception that the Buddha invented meditation come from?

A large percentage of people who attended a few classes, but didn't return, state that they came to the class just for the meditation that there was too much talking. They were clearly uncomfortable learning about the real purpose of meditation. In essence they just want the entertainment experience and the hoped-for results. They wanted to learn how to unwind and relax; learn how to manage stress; become a better person; derive respite from some temporary stressful situation, and so on. I explain that to achieve these kinds of results with meditation, one must understand what is causing these sorts of things in the first place. Otherwise, they would probably get better results from employing a psychologist or counselor.

While there are certainly benefits of practicing breath meditation, merely going through the motions of this ritual practice will not provide lasting benefits. A distinction must be made between the practice of meditation that focuses on calming and relaxing the body, and meditation that is used as a tool to further one's knowledge and understanding of the Buddha Dhamma, such as the Four Noble Truths.

Many people are under the impression that breathing meditation alone is the 'official' meditation of the Buddha or of Buddhists that results in enlightenment. People become disappointed and disinterested when they realize that there is much more to meditation than merely sitting quietly for a period of time. Again, in essence, many have an aversion to the experience and discomfort of knowing the cause of their problems; simply wanting respite from the problems, not discovery of the causes. In this sense then, breath meditation is a hindrance more than a help because the real issues are never actually examined or addressed.

This reaction reminds me of the reason why the Buddha's said that to hear the Buddha Dhamma (teachings of the Buddha) is very rare. There is a much broader perspective of what the word "hear" means. This concept isn't limited to a reference of location, opportunity or time.

To “hear” the Buddha Dhamma refers to a person’s ability to *grasp* and *comprehend* the teachings of the Buddha. With comprehension the meaning of the pure Buddha Dhamma, the purpose of meditation makes more sense.

The ability to comprehend the Buddha Dhamma, is tremendously limited in Western cultures because of the aggressive marketing of meditation and mindfulness, which uses the Buddha and the concept of “Buddha-ism” for profit; to sell books, CDs, and offer expensive retreats. However, this has resulted in a conceptual and perceptual distortion of not only meditation, but also of both the Buddha and the Buddha Dhamma.

Marketing the teachings of the Buddha has, I believe, caused the real purpose of meditation to become less attractive than the marketed, more glossy commercial promises that are served up in connection with so-called Buddhist meditation. With the marketed glossy version of meditation, people are presented with the concept of a kind of cure-all solution for life’s ills. What is being sold is not a method for eradicating suffering, but a kind of spiritualism loosely based on the Buddha’s teachings.

Initially, I presented the meditation lessons as “Beginner Buddhist Meditation.” But, it has quickly become evident that there is a huge difference between what I know to be “Buddhist” meditation and the general perception of meditation. The overall perception of Buddhist meditation reflects the concepts of the glossy mass-marketed version, not the one the Buddha taught. Within the mass-marketed, promise-laden, wishful thinking arena of meditation, exists a great dichotomy. The very things that people are taught to expect to gain, cannot be achieved with just breath meditation. In order to ‘learn how to unwind and relax; learn how to manage stress; become a better person, derive respite from some temporary stressful situation,’ requires more than merely sitting quietly, and focusing on the breath for a period of time.



In the absence of identifying the causes of one’s mental distresses, what then is the purpose of breath meditation? The sole purpose of breath meditation is to train the brain to focus, to learn a one-pointed mental state that does not wander from subject to subject...period. The mechanics of meditation; why and how it works, can only be clearly understood from having correct knowledge and a correct view of the root causes of one’s mental maladies. So, why isn’t the information about meditation clear cut? Why does confusion about meditation exist at all? After all, isn’t meditation just meditation? A Medical Dictionary defines meditation as:

“Meditation is a practice of concentrated focus upon a sound, object, visualization, the breath, movement, or attention itself in order to increase awareness of the present moment, reduce stress, promote relaxation, and enhance personal and spiritual growth.”¹

Theravada monk and scholar, Rahula Walpola has a different interpretation:

“The word meditation is a very poor substitute for the original term Bhavana, which means ‘culture’ or ‘development’, i.e., mental culture or mental development. The Buddhist Bhavana, properly speaking, is a mental culture in the full sense of the term. It aims at cleansing the mind of impurities and disturbances, such as lustful desires, hatred, ill-will, indolence, worries and restlessness, skeptical doubts, and cultivating such qualities as concentration, awareness, intelligence, will, energy, the analytical faculty, confidence, joy, tranquility, leading finally to the attainment of highest wisdom which sees the nature of things as they are, and realizes the Ultimate Truth, Nirvana (Sanskrit) (Pali Nibbana).”²

¹ Meditation: Definition <https://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/Meditation>

² Walpola Rahula, What the Buddha Taught (Grove Press, 1974), p. 68

As Venerable Bhikkhu Walpola states, *the purpose of meditation (bhavana) is aimed at cleansing the mind of impurities and disturbances*. Impurities here means wrong ideas, wrong viewpoints, and wrong beliefs. Of what benefit is meditation if one does nothing to cleanse one's thinking? While achieving some sense of inner peace is certainly important, this is not the purpose of meditation. Meditation is only a means to an end, not the end itself.

But, I do Benefit from My Breathing Meditation...

Of course, you do. It is natural that some benefit is derived from breath meditation because doing it disengages the mind from all our sensory inputs and forces you to stay on one task...breathing. During breath meditation the state of the mind is similar to daydreaming. However, the marketed presentation of breath meditation eventually falls short of the goals represented because it does not address the underlying causes of one's mental impurities and stressors.

Despite this, there are no shortages of "professional," and famous meditation teachers, such as Jon Kabat-Zinn, Tara Brach, Joseph Goldstein, and others, who have become, I might add, quite wealthy³ teaching breath meditation. **Are their teachings to be discounted as not real or ineffective?** *Of course not, but their teachings need to be put into proper perspective.* Simply because a teacher is a former monk or nun or was taught by a famous monk or nun, does not make what they teach true or even effective. Everything is dependent on the purpose of the teaching. Furthermore, the Buddha taught that experience is reality.

People often seek the assistance of a psychologist or counselor in order to learn how to deal with some aspect of life that is causing them stress, anxiety or emotional pain. Perhaps you attend CBT classes (Cognitive Behavioral Therapy).

In CBT classes you will participate in meditation as a part of the program. Meditation on this level focuses on relaxing the mind and the body. There is virtually no difference between this and being taught by or participating in the instructions of any number of famous meditation teachers. Simply because it is called meditation does not mean that it is a practice prescribe or suggested by the Buddha.



Call me a purist, but the Buddha's teachings regarding meditation are cuttngly clear. Ritualized meditation was not something the Buddha taught. He was specific about the method one is to use in order to achieve nibbana. Remember, Buddha's entire theme of the Four Noble Truths is identifying and eradicating the things that cause stress, dissatisfaction and suffering. Many popular and famous meditation teachers only bring people to the doorstep with breath meditation, but never address the underlying causes.

Meditation is only hard or difficult when it is not being done correctly.



The so-called impurities of the mind that the Ven. Rahula Walpola mentions, are the very things that cause stress, dissatisfaction, worry, anxiety, and suffering in the first place. Without identifying the causes, how can one rationally expect to resolve them by merely sitting quietly for an hour or so?

³ Net Worth: Jon kabat-Zinn: <https://networthpost.org/net-worth/jon-kabat-zinn-net-worth/> | Tara Brach: <https://peopleai.com/fame/identities/tara-brach> | Sharon Salzberg: <https://peopleai.com/fame/identities/sharon-salzberg> | Joseph Goldstein: <https://peopleai.com/fame/identities/joseph-goldstein-writer>



Many so-called ‘spiritual’ practices get lumped together with the English word “meditation.” It is important to know and understand that Buddhist meditation is not primarily about reducing stress, although it can do that. Nor is it about temporarily achieving some state of bliss, having visions, out-of-body experiences or connecting with your inner self.

Samatha (tranquility), Metta (loving kindness) and Anapanasati (breathing) are the most popularly marketed forms of meditation. Samatha and Anapanasati meditation mainly focuses on the breath. Metta (loving kindness) Bhavana (meditation) focuses on thoughts of loving kindness, extending loving kindness to others.

Traditionally, students are instructed to sit in uncomfortable positions, and keep track of the in-breaths and out-breaths or to focus on the rising and falling of the abdomen. But, this is only a very, very preliminary step toward learning effective meditation. This type of meditation should not be practiced for long periods of time as some persons do, practicing for years.

The reason that many people complain that breathing meditation is so difficult is actually because, continuous use of this form of meditation produces little else than being focused on the breath. Tranquility meditation certainly can cause one to feel more focused and relaxed, but beyond this, being able to focus one’s attention, while necessary, is only a preliminary step. That one is making some progress beyond merely focusing the mind, in reality, is only a temporary idea, which is a kind of trick of the mind. In reality the only actual progress that is made is limited to learning how to cause oneself to be relaxed, and because you are relaxed, it is easier to focus, but focus on what, being relaxed?

Breathing meditation is merely the starting point of meditation; the first in a series of steps that eventually cleanses impurities, but was never intended to be the end-all method for achieving liberation from stress or a way to become a better you. There are reasons why you experience stress, worry, unhappiness, lethargy, hopelessness, and so on. Breathing meditation by itself will not cause you to discover the answers of **why** you are experiencing these things.

Breathing meditation is sort of like training wheels on a bicycle, they are not meant to be permanent. Once you have learned how to balance the bicycle the training wheels come off because you no longer need them. Continued practice of breathing meditation without advancing to the next step, is also like filtering out the water on the top of the pool, but leaving the scum and muck at the bottom. As anyone who owns a pool knows, it does not take much to stir up the muck at the bottom. Effective meditation seeks to filter the whole pool so that it is clear, clean and translucent to the degree that there is nothing to disturb.

Meditation, when done correctly, clears the mind and filters out the muck that is deep within your consciousness. Decades of mental gymnastics, opinions, beliefs, successes and failures is the muck at the bottom of the pool.

Identifying your muck cannot be achieved with breathing meditation alone. You take on meditation to deal with and remove the things that cause you to suffer, but if you don't know what it really is that causes you to suffer, how can sitting quietly possibly produce results? Are you expecting some magic to happen; that one day all your efforts to meditate are going to reveal the root causes of your problems? That is not going to happen, and this is why people become discouraged with breathing meditation after a while.

Why Are People Drawn to Meditation?

There is a misconception that meditation is attributed to or invented by the Buddha. Meditation has been a feature of humanity for countless millennia before the Buddha. The Buddha refined the use of meditation and explained how practicing it relates to achieving liberation from suffering. Why are people drawn to meditation? The picture at the top of page 4 is not an endorsement. Rather, it shows the many claims made about meditation. Take note of who is sponsoring this ad: Psychology Today Magazine, the famed Mayo Clinic and the "I Need Motivation" Web site. These are considered major authorities by most people's standards. If the Mayo Clinic says that meditation will do all of these things then it must be true.

While it is true that meditation does provide certain physiological benefits, lasting psychological, emotional, and mental (brain) benefits actually cannot be achieved by simple breath meditation. This is because the simple reduction of stress will not lead to any permanent removal of the real issues. Breathing meditation may provide immediate stress reduction on a physiological and psychological level, but what happens after the session is over?

Is it any wonder why people are drawn to meditation, particularly in the West, when claims such as are marketed in the illustration above? Claims such as these are similar to the snake oil ads of the 19th and early 20th centuries; outlandish claims that have no basis of truth whatsoever.

In the long-term, mere breathing meditation cannot, under any circumstances, deliver the sorts of benefits listed in the illustration above. One critical factor is left out: *What is the cause of these maladies in the first place?* If the cause is never known, then breathing meditation is like using a band-aid to treat cancer.

The Actual Purpose of Meditation

Ultimately the real goal of meditation is to identify the root causes of stress. The root causes of stress, according to the Buddha, are greed, hate, and delusion. We need to be able to identify how these three things effect our everyday lives. This is discussed a little further in this article. But, once identified, the next step is to gradually remove these impurities from our thinking, habits, personality and character. Understanding how greed, hate and delusion create problems is critical if one is to gain any benefit from meditation at all.

If you seek tranquility, peace of mind; a way to better yourself, a respite from stress: Whatever the reasons you either meditate now or want to meditate, breath meditation alone is utterly pointless in the long term. Simple breath meditation alone will not "cause" you to become tranquil, happy or less stressed. The belief that breath meditation can magically provide these things leads to inevitable disappointment.

In order to achieve any benefit from meditation, you need to learn how to cleanse all forms of greed, hate and delusion from your habitual way of thinking that invades and disrupts your life. You cannot just shut off the influence of greed, hate or ignorance. First, you have to be able to identify these things within yourself, and how they create problems.



Right at this moment you may be thinking that you do not have greedy, hateful or ignorant, deluded thoughts or you may believe that you are not influenced by such things. However, I am going to be a little bit in your face right now and say that **you are influenced by these things**, everyone is.

If you have a desire to meditate, first you must examine WHY you want to meditate. What do you hope to achieve with meditation? If you believe, as many people do, that there is some magical or spiritual component to meditation, you would be wholly mistaken. If you are like many Westerners who think that there are **lasting or permanent** mental or psychological benefits to be gained through breath meditation, you would also be incorrect.

Unless you understand HOW meditation is supposed to work, you may be embarking on a fruitless effort to achieve the things you assume that you can. Instead of embarking on something that you know nothing about, hoping for beneficial results, it would be better to get an idea of what “Buddhist Meditation” really is, by examining the path prescribed by the Buddha.

I have heard a lot of people complain that although making a concerted effort, meditation is not only difficult, but they can’t really tell if it is working. There is a definite and specific reason for this. Not knowing how to meditate is only the tip of the iceberg, so to speak. The real reason is because you are meditating on nothing.

Claims of the benefits of breath meditation are almost always greatly exaggerated, which you can pretty much count on if you join some so-called Buddhist organization that charges you for group meditation. True meditation that is taught by monks and experienced lay persons will rarely involve the exchange of money. If the exchange of money is involved it is likely that you will only be presented with a watered-down version of real meditation. Furthermore, once you learn true meditation practices, your need to attend instruction classes will dissipate, you should be able to advance on your own. However, this does not include learning the Buddha Dhamma, which may take many years of instruction from an individual who is knowledgeable through practice of the Buddha Dhamma. Suffice-it-to-say meditation that is done correctly takes effort and determination.

True Meditation: What is it?

Now, not to confuse anyone, but there is actually no such thing as true meditation. The act of meditating alone is merely a ritual. The force behind meditation is understanding and knowledge. Once you have a clear idea of what it is that you are meditating on and why you are meditating, then meditation becomes truly effective. This is why the word meditation in the Pali texts is bhavana, which means becoming. Initially, consider how it could be possible for someone to remove impurities of the mind by merely watching the breath. What are you becoming? Bhavana/meditation means that you are becoming something other than what you are. True meditation changes your mind and redirects wrong views so that you “become” capable of seeing your own delusions; meaning that you begin to “become” capable of understanding the truth about the nature of reality. One **becomes** “mindful,” “awakened,” and “enlightened” through proper meditation.

All forms of meditation train you to learn how to focus one's thinking. What "thinking" you focus on is the critical part. Practicing meditation with a correct view to the things that cause you to experience suffering opens up space in your consciousness, giving you the ability to isolate the particular issues that cause your suffering, disappointment, distress, anxiety and so on, even if you do not think these things exist within you.

So, effective meditation has a purpose outside of just relaxing or calming one's nerves. Meditation is the vehicle by which you can identify and remove the causes of anxiety, distress, anger, disappointment, delusion, ignorance, sadness, depression, and everything that leads to those experiences, thus "becoming" calm, focused, and awake.

It is not the meditation alone that gradually reduces greed, anger, and hate, it is the knowledge and correct view of how greed, anger and hate apply to your own life. Combined, with understanding and right view, you begin developing wisdom about **why** and **how** you suffer the things that you do. The act of removing greed, anger, and ignorance from one's mind is known as Nibbana in the Pali language and Nirvana in Sanskrit.

Nibbana (nirvana) is probably one of the most misunderstood concepts, next to kamma (karma) and rebirth. In the absence of correct knowledge and understanding, wrong views created by delusions (not illusions) about these things become firmly established. Many people perceive Nibbana to be some sort of esoteric metaphysical Buddhist principle.

Buddha taught that Nibbana is something that is done; actions that we take to produce certain results. Quite literally the word Nibbāna means "a blowing out" or "a cooling down," of the defilements (impurities) of our thinking, perceptions, and beliefs. All distresses and sufferings are due to our defiled, stained, and impure minds.



What is defilement anyway? A defilement is anything that spoils the purity of something. For example, a beautiful landscape that is ruined by pollution or trash. Something that would otherwise be pure or beautiful, but has been spoiled or ruined is a defilement. A bruise on an otherwise perfect apple is a defilement. Roses become defiled by aphids. A worm defiles an ear of corn. As one trains themselves to see the cause of these mental hindrances, then one begins to purify the mind; in-other-words, one begins experiencing Nibbāna, a blowing out or cooling down of impurities. This takes focus, mindfulness, attention, determination and effort. There is no magic involved. There is no esoteric or metaphysical formula.

Sammā Ditṭhi (sah-mah dee-tee)

Samma *sam* or *san* + "mā" means "removing defilements." Ditṭhi, refers to the eye depending on context. However, this Pali word is also used contextually to mean "sight," "seeing," "view," as in viewpoints or understanding. Therefore, the common translation is "correct" or "right" view. After the removal of a defilement, impurities in the form of ignorance, delusion, hatred or greed, what remains is the right view or correct view.

For example; A person who does not understand the real meaning of things like kamma, meditation (bhavana) or Nibbana, maintains a delusion and an ignorance of an incorrect view. Once the ignorance and delusion are removed, a person then has the right view or the correct view.

Samma ditthi is the very first step of the Eightfold Noble Path, and it is easy to understand why. If a person does not know how to develop correct understanding or right views about even the most basic teachings of the Buddha, how can they expect to remove any mental impurities?

Meditation therefore, is a tool that allows one to learn how to develop the right views. Developing the right view causes us to grasp right concepts (*samma sankappa*). But, if one maintains, and holds onto wrong views, wrong beliefs, wrong opinions about meditation, then how could one ever advance beyond the ritual of merely sitting and watching the breath? The progression for understanding the rest of the Eightfold Path does not make sense without right view. This is critical with regard to holding the right view of meditation.

Honesty in Meditation Marketing

Western representation of meditation is not always honest, and in fact is frequently not forthright in the descriptions that are used. Most claim that meditation creates a sense of well-being, happiness and peace. And this is true while one is focused on the breath. Full disclosure of what meditation is and what it means is scant. The truth is that once one is able to achieve the right views of greed, hate and delusion, meditation often leads you down a rocky road to **becoming** (*bhavana*) happy or peaceful. It is not always easy or comfortable to see ourselves as we really are; to see and understand our own connection to greed, hate and delusion.

Without a correct understanding or right view, the road to happiness and peace of mind will be very long indeed. After all, if you don't know what it is that you are searching for, how will you ever find it; how will you know how to identify it even if it is obvious? This is why many become very confused and get lost along the way just sticking with breath meditation. The only way to obtain a correct view of meditation is to be taught by a knowledgeable instructor who has the right view of greed, hate and delusion through practical experience.



Developing the correct view requires the meditator to have confidence in the teachings of the Buddha. A meditator must also be able to develop confidence that right views combined with correct meditation actually works. Building right view does not happen immediately. Rather, confidence in the Buddha's teachings develops gradually. Correct or right view of the effects of greed, hate and delusion begins building insight and wisdom which greatly enhances one's meditation.

Lobha, Dosa & Moha

Lōbha, is generally translated as “greed.” Lōbha is associated with sensual (sense-based) desire. However, the word “greed” is too limited. Lōbha could be translated as “desire,” while keeping in mind that it refers to unwholesome desires. Deeply desiring something, like coveting something is lōbha. **Dosa**, is generally translated as “hatred.” However, hatred is a strong word. Contextually, dosa can refer to anything that stems from ill-will, anger or displeasure. **Moha**, is generally translated as “delusion.” Again, this is a strong word. An alternate word that might be used is “confusion” or “ignorance.” Although “ignorance” in the Pali texts is known as *avijja* (ah-vee-jah). Delusion is a deep misapprehension of the nature of the mind.

In essence, these three words are used to describe the three bad motivations or intentions that cause stress and lend to developing negative kamma. These are also the root cause of a lack of peace of mind, happiness, and tranquility. How do you know if you are affected by these three things? If you weren't you would experience complete harmony, peace of mind and contentment. Only someone who understands and practices the pure Buddha Dhamma (teachings of the Buddha) experiences this state.

Through a correct understanding of meditation, one is able to identify these three traits within our personality, character and mental position (opinions/beliefs). Seeing (understanding) that the source of your suffering stems from the influence of these three things is what having the right view is all about. Right view is not about right or wrong as much as it is about understanding, and the comprehension of what is true and real.

Most people, particularly in the West, start meditating even before understanding what to meditate on. If one is doing “breath meditation,” there is nothing to learn, you are merely watching the breath come into the body and be released from the body. This type of meditation is a good starting point for those who have never meditated before. The purpose of breath meditation is simply to train the mind to focus in order to prevent the uncontrollable brain chatter that naturally occurs because of being untrained. However, believing that breath meditation will change your life; make you happy; give you peace is an insult to the Buddha.

Buddha’s teaching about greed, hate and delusion provides a way to understand how to stop future suffering from arising. In order to achieve this, one must first realize the unfruitfulness, and the danger in being attached to this World and its influences.

Pali scholar and physicist, Lal Ariyaratna Pinnaduwa explains this quite eloquently:

“One needs to experience a “peace of mind” or “cooling down” (nirāmisa sukha⁴) before starting on the Noble Path [Eightfold Noble Path] to Nibbāna; the transition to the Sotāpanna⁵ stage happens when one comprehends the anicca nature⁶ while experiencing nirāmisa sukha. After that transition, nirāmisa sukha becomes permanent with the removal of the pañcanivaraṇa⁷. Many people start meditating without understanding what to meditate on. One needs to learn the basics of pure Buddha Dhamma first.

⁴ **Niramisa sukha:** Niramisa: Free from sensual desires, disinterested, not material SN.i.35, SN.i.60; SN.iv.219, SN.iv.235; SN.v.68, SN.v.332; AN.iii.412; DN.iii.278 Vb.195; Vism.71; Sukha: happiness, comfort.

⁵ **Sotapanna:** According to the “Upaḍḍha Sutta (SN 45.2)” once, Ven. Ananda told the Buddha that he thinks half (“upaḍḍhamidaṃ”) of the factors contributing someone getting to Nibbāna (by completing the brahmacariya) can be attributed to association with a Noble Friend (kalyāṇamittā.) Here, “kalyāṇa” means to “help remove defilements,” and “mittā” is a friend. An average human can learn about it ONLY from a Buddha or a true disciple of a Buddha who has also understood that Dhamma. However, the guidance is REQUIRED only to understand this “new worldview” that has never been known to the world. That means once getting to the Sotapanna stage, a human would understand the Eightfold Noble Path and how to follow it to get to the Arahant hood. Just by understanding the “new worldview,” a large number of defilements (āsava/anusaya) are removed from the mind and that is referred to as “dassanā pahātabbā” (removal with vision). When one truly understands anicca, dukkha, anatta, this wrong view goes away. One realizes that nothing we do can lead to permanent happiness “in this world.” Furthermore, for one who has seen anicca, dukkha, anatta, the mind does not allow serious wrongdoings (vici+ki+iccha = liking for wrong actions or things) that could lead to rebirth in a lower realm. There is no doubt regarding the “world vision” that they realized. Thus vicikicchā, or the liking (mindset) for unfruitful and harmful actions, is removed at the Sōtapanna stage. Therefore, one needs to contemplate the true nature of the world. It is done by purifying the mind and cannot be done just by following certain rituals, such as just obeying precepts on certain days. Removal (of wrong views) by clear vision (“dassanā pahātabbā,” where dassana is vision and pahātabbā is removal). That is a clear understanding of anicca, dukkha, anatta. Removal by meditation (“bhāvanā pahātabbā”). When one has a clear vision in removal of wrong views (dassanā pahātabbā), it becomes apparent **what** to contemplate or meditate on. A Sōtapanna removes the diṭṭhāsava (cravings due to wrong views) through clear vision. Once one understood the true nature of “this world” by contemplating anicca, dukkha, anatta, one would not commit any immoral acts to gain anything in “this world.”

⁶ **Anicca nature:** Getting what we do not like. Not being able to keep what we like. This is the core of the the First Noble Truth, which clearly states that anicca nature is the root cause of suffering. Associating with things that one does not like is stressful and having to separate from those things one likes is stressful.

⁷ **Pañcanivaraṇa:** Five-fold obstacles for the progress of mind; sensuality (attached to sense desires), ill-will (anger, hatred, loathing, aversion), torpor of mind (languidness, dullness, indolence, lethargy), worry (anxiety), wavering (doubt). See:

<https://suttacentral.net/search?query=pa%C3%B1can%C4%ABvara%E1%B9%87a>

One can start with conventional meditation techniques that are out there, but in order to grasp deeper Dhamma, one needs to seriously start staying away from the ten defilements (dasa akusala⁸) as much as possible.⁹

It isn't always easy to identify these things within ourselves. The words hatred, greed and delusion, tend to bring to mind only the extreme mental versions of each. However, each one has many different levels, intensities and characteristics.

Dosa, the word for 'hatred' in Pali, is one of three unwholesome roots (*mūla*) in the mind, encompassing aversion, negative feelings, emotions, rejection, irritation, condemnation, enmity, jealousy anger, and violence. All of the things we work to try and avoid. Notable is the word "aversion," which refers to anything that we have a distaste for; are disgusted by; a loathing for; nausea of; repugnance of, repelled by; a revulsion; things we disfavor; have a disinclination of; disliking for; displeasure of, and so on.



Hatred (Dosa)

When we hold strong opinions or beliefs regarding things that we have an aversion to, we experience mental stress/distress. Keep in mind, it is very important to comprehend that this is not a reference to natural aversion, such as the smell of excrement or other unpleasant things that repel our senses. **Dosa are the things that come from within you not from outside of you.** This is why Dosa is described as one of the unwholesome roots of the 'mind.'

Dosa is often mixed with *mōha*; delusion /ignorance (*avijjā*). For example: A child is raised by parents who have an aversion to people of different nationalities or race. This is all the child knows. If a child exhibits any other belief or behavior that is different from the parents, the child is chastised or punished in some way. The parents pass their aversion, delusions, and ignorance on to the child. This is an extreme model. What about beliefs and opinions we hold that cause us mental stress or difficulties, but we hold on to our beliefs and opinions anyway? We have a deep sense of aversion to anything that threatens our way of thinking?

Throughout history, and even into our own Age, humankind has witnessed class divisions between rich and poor; religious divisions between Christian and Muslim; political divisions between Democrat and Republican; racial divisions between Black and White; sexual divisions between men and women; divisions between LGBTQ+++⁽ⁿ⁾ and heterosexuals; divisions in cultures, nationalities, customs, and more recently ethical divisions between truths and falsehoods as evidenced by a former US President and his administration. Is there no end in sight? This is *dosa* (hatred/aversion), and it is the root cause of all of the World's woes.

Because of all of this division and separation, we view ourselves as distinct from everything else. This state of mind causes us to judge things as desirable, and we want to grasp them, or we judge things to be undesirable, feel aversion, and want to avoid them. We try to protect our delusions. This is why we become so angry with people who get between us and something that we want or something we believe. People become jealous of others who have things that they want. We have a disliking and sometimes deep hatred of things that frighten us or that we believe pose a threat. We are averse and skeptical toward anything we don't understand.

⁸ **Dasa akusala:** Dasa is the number 10. Akusala are: (*adjective*) not good, not right; evil, harmful, not conducive to well-being; evil, acting wrongly; (nominative and masculine) what is bad or evil; wrong or unsuitable action or behavior; what leads to suffering or is harmful; (*adjective*) not good at, incompetent; not skilled, not expert; not knowledgeable about or conversant with kusala (opposite of akusala). See: <https://suttacentral.net/search?query=akusala>

⁹ Peace of Mind: <https://puredhamma.net/living-dhamma/peace-of-mind-to-nibbana-the-key-step/>

There is a plethora of things that can be attributed to dosa. Some people become jealous over another's knowledge and education. Some people are hardened by their religious beliefs and so their minds become unbending, unable to accept any other reasoning or explanation.

There are many diverse ways we experience dosa (hatred/aversion), **most** of which are very subtle. Seeing (understanding) your aversions reveals not only what it is that you are averse to, why you are averse to them, but also includes our strong opinions, likes, dislikes, and beliefs, which we stubbornly cling to and maintain. At times we maintain aversions and hatreds because we have no knowledge of any other alternative. Other times we maintain our aversions and hatreds because of pride. We don't want to believe that we are wrong; that our viewpoints, opinions and beliefs are incorrect. This is where dosa becomes entangled with delusion and ignorance.

With correct understanding and a right viewpoint, we can begin to see that the mental and sometimes physical distresses we suffer, are of our own making because of our own attachments to the things to which we have developed an aversion (dosa).

Greed (Lobha)

LOBHA



GREED

How can we know when something is real? We can know absolutely when something is real because only what is experienced is real.

Only what we see, smell, touch, taste, and hear are real.

Similar to the preceding discussion of 'dosa,' we experience lōbha (greed/coveting) at various levels. Although lōbha is generally translated as 'greed' or 'craving,' different English words are applicable because there are different degrees of lōbha, whereas it can be coarse (obvious), medium (noticeable) or mild (subtle). Some of the English words that describe greed are:

Selfishness	Acquisitiveness	Avidity
Covetousness	Excessiveness	Cupidity
Eagerness	Extravagance	Esurience
Indulgence	Intemperance	Piggishness
Rapacity	Ravenousness	Voracity
Swinishness	Gormandizing	Longing
Lustful	Graspingness	Craving
Yearning	Insatiableness	Edacity
Avarice	Excess	Gluttony
Hunger	Greed	Demanding

Lōbha refers to a desire or and attraction for something we believe will gratify us, enhance or better our lives. Lōbha also refers to the energy that drives us to preserve ourselves and to protect what we have or think we have. Lōbha goes beyond mere desire when it is intensified by the emotional attachment of demanding something for ourselves.

Greed can take a lot of different forms, as is evidenced by the chart above. The best example of lōbha is our desire to acquire things that we believe will elevate our status. We may be emotionally and mentally driven to obtain the most stylish clothes so that we will be popular and admired thus buying in to the delusion of increasing or enhancing our status. Also, the mental position that "I've got mine" is lōbha. This extends to habits of hoarding anything, even knowledge. We hoard in order to protect something, regardless of what it is we are trying to protect. Sometimes we hoard things even if doing so prevents others from having or enjoying what it is that you are hoarding.

Self-aggrandizement (glorification) is another example. Desiring to be popular, have notoriety, be recognized and special, often puts us at odds with those around us, who are also seeking the same things. This creates competition, anxiety, jealousy, fear, and hatred. Manipulation and exploitation of others to get what we want or to force others to see our point of view or accept our beliefs. Anything that causes us to make ourselves feel high-minded; better than others; more fortunate than others, is lōbha.



Pretty much everyone can recognize *lōbha* when it is obvious, but not always when it operates at a lesser degree. For example, we can recognize *lōbha* when we eat too much of a delicious meal, or when we become attached to alcohol, cigarettes or marijuana. We pursue the continued experience of something that gives us pleasure. Also, we don't always notice the operation of *lōbha* when we become attached to people, particularly when we become financially or emotionally dependent on others. We seek ways in which to insure the presence or cooperation of others for our own benefit. This operation of *lōbha* becomes very evident when we lose those in who we depend upon, we experience distress, sorrow and sometimes hopelessness.

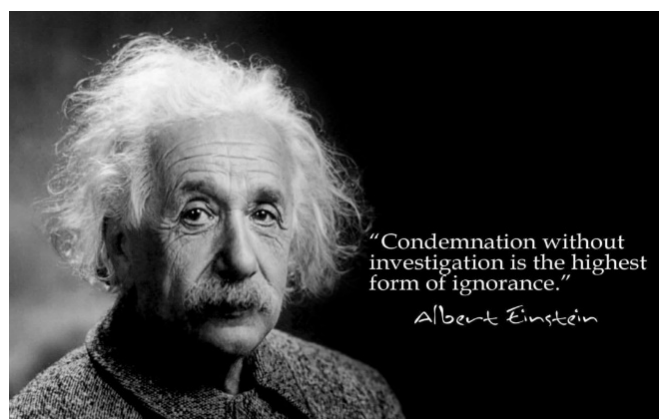
Unless we gain knowledge of the various ways in which *lōbha* (greed/desire) play into our lives, we will not be able to rid ourselves of the distress that *lōbha* causes. *Lōbha* arises on account of what we experience in daily life through our attachments to the things that we desire, covet and attempt to protect for the purpose of self-satisfaction. If the experience of *lōbha* is not as intense as straight-up greed or lust, we may not even notice when it is in play. Every time there is a pleasant sight, sound, odor, taste or tangible object, *lōbha* is likely to arise, countless times a day.

Lōbha arises when there are conditions for its arising, and will remain out of your control without knowledge and right view. Buddha spoke about *lōbha* in many suttas, and teaches of the dangers of it and the way to overcome it.

Pleasant objects which can be experienced through the five senses are explained in several suttas known as the 'five strands of sense-pleasures'. In the 'Mahā-dukkhakkhandha -sutta' ('Greater Discourse on the Stems of Anguish', Middle Length Discourses I, No. 13) that when the Buddha was staying near Sāvattthī, in the Jeta Grove, he said to the monks:

"And what, monks, is the satisfaction in pleasures of these senses? These five, are the strands of sense-pleasures. What five? Material shapes recognized by the eye, agreeable, pleasant, liked, enticing, connected with alluring sensual pleasures. Sounds, recognized by the ear, smells, recognized by the nose, tastes, recognized by the tongue, touches, recognized by the body, agreeable, pleasant, liked, enticing, connected with sensual pleasures, and alluring. Whatever pleasure, whatever liking arises in consequence of these five strands of sense-pleasures, this is the satisfaction in sense-pleasures."

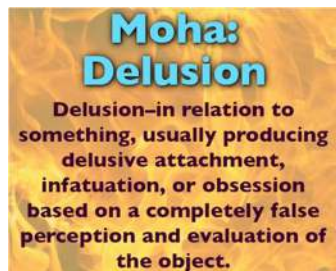
Satisfaction derived from sense-pleasures is not true happiness. *Joy and satisfaction are the results of true happiness not the cause of it.* Those who are not familiar with the Buddha's teachings may think that attachment is good, especially when it arises with a pleasant feeling. They do not know the difference between attachment and loving kindness (*mettā*), which may both arise with a pleasant feeling. However, thoughts accompanied by pleasant feelings are not necessarily good or beneficial thoughts. Without knowledge we cannot be mindful of these characteristics. We will not notice that pleasant feelings may arise with thoughts that are rooted in attachment and clinging.



It is possible to see lōbha in action within our daily habits. Contemplative meditation is the doorway, but is not the house. When we want something, we desire it or we think we need it, sometimes demanding to ourselves and others that we must have it. So, we will formulate ideas and plans, taking actions to obtain what we want. Perhaps we notice that many women are wearing a certain new fashion or carry a new style handbag. Perhaps you discover a new kind of medicine that will help you to be a more sexually virile man or develop a sexier muscular body. The desire or subtle demands we make on others to agree with our point of view, even to the point of distorting the truth to support our opinions, is also lōbha.

Sometimes the things you desire are expensive, and may be outside of your immediate financial capacity, but this does not stop you from devising plans or strategies for obtaining the things you want. You make sacrifices in other areas, which may cause distress in order to obtain what you desire. If there is a deep attachment to your desire where you covet something, this lōbha could turn into something more serious such as stealing or depriving yourself and others of necessary things in order to obtain what it is you desire.

Mōha (Delusion/Ignorance)



Whenever there is mōha, we live in darkness of true knowledge and nature of the World. Buddha Dhamma (teachings of the Buddha) is the

knowledge that dispels mōha. One who does not know Buddha Dhamma, remains ignorant about the world, about themselves; about good and bad deeds and the consequences of them. Moreover, many people, even so-called meditators and mindfulness junkies are completely ignorant about the importance of identifying mental impurities. Mōha is characteristic of mental blindness, rooted in a person's opposition to knowledge. Delusion and ignorance (avijja) are the foundations of mental non-penetration; the function of covering the intrinsic true nature of things.

Mōha is therefore the proximate cause of a person's unwise attention to the things that they desire and become attached to, without ever seeing the significance or rationalizing that the consequences are worth the suffering. As with dosa and lōbha, there are many degrees of mōha. Study of the Buddha Dhamma, and subsequent understanding of the causes of suffering, dissolves ignorance and or delusions about reality.

However, this does not mean nor is it a guarantee that we can completely eradicate mōha. Ignorance and delusion can only be eradicated by developing wisdom (panna); a wisdom that 'sees' (comprehends) the World as it really is. Understanding how mōha operates in our daily lives means that we have gained insight and wisdom into the effects that greed, hate and delusion effects the interpretation of our senses, but also how we view the realities around us.

What are the characteristics of mōha? Mōha does not refer to delusions or ignorance such as a lack of education or someone who does not know what is happening in the world. In order to understand the characteristics of mōha we need to know **what** we are ignorant of, when mōha is in operation. Delusion and ignorance, with regard to mōha, means conceptual, mental ignorance and delusion. So, Mōha refers to the mental state of awareness of having no clue as to our own mental phenomena or our own mental blockages about reality. When we ignore certain things that are real and replace them with mental constructs, such as wishful thinking, fantasies, opinions or beliefs that have no basis for actual fact, then this is mōha. Delusion, therefore feeds and compounds ignorance.

Direct experience IS reality. Visible objects and seeing is real. Their characteristics cannot be changed. However, when we cling to concepts and names, which are represented by conventional terms such as flower or table, we do not experience any characteristic of the reality of the thing. What is real when we look at a flower? What is directly experienced? The direct experience comes through the eyes and perhaps the nose. This same principal applies to the Buddha Dhamma because when it is understood and practiced, it is directly experienced. This direct experience is reality.



What Does Your Meditation Do for You?

Many people attribute great benefits obtained because of breath or loving kindness meditation (Anapanasati, samatha or mettā). This type of meditation is practiced regularly, sometimes daily, for years. Of course, it is a given that the more frequently one engages in breath meditation, the more one experiences the calming effects on the mind. Regularly scheduled breath meditation sessions become habitual over time because we seek to experience the calm and serenity that it provides. This is the only benefit. There is an inherent problem associated with this kind of repetitive practice...you will become hooked on it!



However, isn't it a natural tendency to go back to those things that provide us with sense pleasures? Yes, it is true that one may experience tranquility (peace of mind) during breath meditation sessions, but this is due to the temporary suppression of the five hindrances. These five hindrances are everyday wakeful cravings, tendencies to un-bore ourselves, to distract our thinking, moods and emotions or to simply keep ourselves from becoming angry, sleepy, mentally dull or indecisive. Hindrances are the background noises that invade our lives that cause so much stress, tension and anxiety.



So, during meditation, when your mind is temporarily distracted from these hindrances, breath meditation appears to be working its magic. Your brain generates emotions and senses and experience a time-out, a period of calm. Do you see how easily something like breath meditation can become addictive?

Each time we meditate and have a good session; feeling refreshed, calm and composed, it is not uncommon to develop a strong urge to repeat it. During meditation we block out all sense pleasures, along with the worries and the stressors we experience. We begin to really enjoy our regular doses of peace of mind. In many respects, we risk becoming or have become addicted to the results/effects of our meditation. We are not advancing our knowledge of the Buddha Dhamma; we are not really contemplating on how mōha, dosa and lōbha effect our lives, we merely and habitually seek a repeat of the experience of peace of mind and calm. There is absolutely nothing wrong with wanting to experience this state of being, however, Buddha emphasized that everything must be balanced, which is what the teachings of the Middle Way is all about. In a very real way long-term practice of breath meditation is like taking a sedative.



Dipobhasadhamma

People who have practiced long-term breath or loving kindness meditation often complain that when they stop for any reason, and do not get their regular dose, they feel a sense of stress and tension. Why does this happen? Because they are addicted to these forms of meditation. Again, just to be perfectly clear, there is nothing wrong with either breathing or loving kindness meditation. When it is done additively, then it's a problem.

The urge to return to breathing or loving kindness meditation comes back very strong at later times, because the experience is the complete opposite of sense pleasures. A sense of well-being, calm and satisfaction can be maintained as long as one stays in the meditation mindset. But it is not an “enjoyment” in the sense of a sense pleasure. If

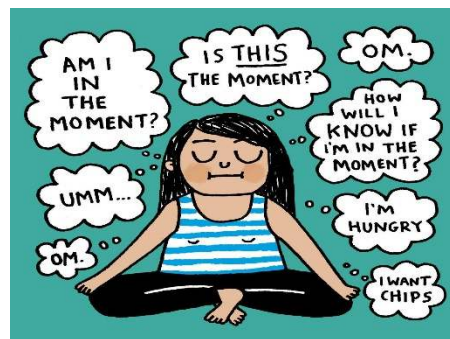


you get the sense that you cannot leave off meditation without changing the core of your personality, then there is a problem.

Why do people think that meditation is magic in the first place? In Western cultures particularly, meditation is marketed as magic, which is indicated by the various images that are included throughout this section. Every sort of beneficial claim imaginable is made about the magic of meditation. Every single one of these claims is false, and undermines the purpose and efficacy of meditation.

Simply feeling better is not the purpose of Buddhist meditation. Anyone who is addicted to something, whether it be food, marijuana, alcohol, chocolate, sex, TV, the Internet, Social Media, and so on, always experiences “feeling better” when they are engaged with the things they have become attached to. Why? Because any addiction has the effect of distracting us from the reality of life, and offers a respite from the tensions of the five hindrances. Of course, you're going to feel better, but you cannot live in the fog of addiction.

How do you know when your meditation is effective and when it is working?



The only way to make a sound judgment of any meditation practice is to critically examine it and see whether your practice causes you to understand and explain the realities of yourself and the World around you. Feeling better is no true indication that you are on the right path.

The fact that many become addicted to breathing meditation is also due to the fact that it does not appear to have any adverse consequences. Even though this may appear to be true, there are harmful implications in the long run because precious time is being wasted on a practice that will not advance you to an understanding of the Buddha Dhamma or of comprehending the kind of suffering that mōha, dosa and lōbha cause.

Most people get stuck in the mindset that breath meditation is the only meditation there is. Some have heard about Vipassana, which is also known as Insight meditation. Vipassana means to sort out and get rid of undesired thoughts that come to the mind. However, in order to remove such mental impurities, at the very least, one has to first understand mōha, dosa and lōbha (greed, hate and delusion). Additionally, it would be most beneficial to have knowledge and understanding of the *annica*-nature of this World (viz: The inability to maintain satisfaction). This is the core teaching of the Buddha.



Real vipassana meditation involves analyzing why such ignorant, greedy or hateful thoughts arise and roost (alaya) in our personality, but more importantly, to recognize their consequences for the purpose of ridding oneself of them. Merely redirecting the mind away from such thoughts by focusing on the breath is not a real solution. When one is successful at recognizing the consequences of impure thoughts and beliefs, then such thoughts and beliefs will gradually cease to arise. This is a more permanent solution. This is explained in the Maha Satipatthana Sutta¹⁰.

The Key to Buddhist Meditation

One phrase: **Pañca Nivaraṇa** (pahyn-ka nih-vih-rah-nah), represents the Buddha's teaching of the Five Hindrances. The five hindrances are those things which defile the mind; in a sense these hindrances cover and prevent pure mind, causing it to experience agitation, lethargy, anxiety, and so on. These hindrances prevent us from recognizing that craving sensory pleasures are the root (mula) origins that block us from understanding the very things that cause us stress and suffering. These hindrances therefore, are mental states that make it difficult for a person to have one-pointed focus or to comprehend new concepts. These five mental hindrances named by the Buddha are as follows:

1. Sensual desire (kamacchandha).
2. Ill-will (vayāpāda).
3. Laziness and lethargy (thinamiddha).
4. Restlessness and remorse (uddhacca-kukkucca).
5. Skeptical doubt (vicikicchā).

Purifying one's mind requires recognition of these hindrances. To recognize them one must understand the scope of how they operate in your life. Specifically, this requires a comprehension that craving for sensory pleasures (*kāma*¹¹ [not kamma/karma]) is the origin of all stress, dissatisfaction, disappointment, anxiety, and worry.

How can you recognize the Five Hindrances?

Contemplation and reflection are also meditation. By the nature of the hindrances some are more obvious than others. Laziness and mental lethargy are more obvious than sensual desire. Sensual, in this regard, does not only mean sex or sexual desire. It means a desire to satisfy any of the senses, whether it is sight, sound, smell, taste or touch.

The reason for the difficulty in recognizing the Five Hindrances is because the mind becomes heated and agitated so easily. We accumulate decades of "muck" that infest our minds, blocking reality and preventing our ability to comprehend the truth about the nature of reality. This muck or gunk that we accumulate the Buddha called kilēsa or keles (kih-lay-sah). These kilesa are mental impurities. Every bit of "gunk" that clutters our mental insight and clouds our mental capacity is due to greed, hate, and ignorance or delusion.

When the conscious mind is freed from this accumulated gunk, then the state of the conscious mind becomes calm; it cools down (nibbana). Eventually, when enough of our mental gunk is removed there are no negative, gunk-like elements that can disturb or agitate the calm mind. The result of correct meditation causes one to remain in a persistent meditative-like state, e.g. a heightened, natural state of mindfulness and awareness.

The Pali word *nīvaraṇa* (nih-vah-rah-nah) is used to describe the veil that prevents the capacity of seeing right from wrong, good from bad, pleasant from unpleasant. In our modern Age many things that are actually bad for human consumption, particularly if they can be commoditized and marketed, are considered good. Yes, the flavor of calorie, sugar, salt and fat-laden foods are tasty, but they are not good for your health.

¹⁰ Maha Sattipatthana Sutta: <https://puredhamma.net/sutta-interpretations/maha-satipatthana-sutta/satipatthana-sutta-structure/>

¹¹ Kāma: Thinking about and planning to enjoy more sensual pleasures; giving priority to mind-made pleasures. There are sensory contacts that naturally bring pleasurable experiences or feelings. Eating delicious food or smelling a rose gives a pleasurable feeling. Such experiences themselves are not kāma. Kama involves a person's intentions and subsequent actions of "planning" and "prioritizing" (kāma assāda=mind-made pleasures). Enjoyable sense pleasures come our way all the time, and we will certainly experience them, but when we go out of our way to plan and prioritize the repeat of sensual pleasures, this is kāma; e.g. intentionally focusing on repeating experiences of sensual pleasures; desiring/clinging.



A 2004 American documentary film followed a 30-day period from February 1 to March 2, 2003, during which time Morgan Spurlock ate only McDonald's food. The film documents the drastic effect on Spurlock's physical and psychological health and well-being. It also

explores the fast food industry's corporate influence, including how it encourages poor nutrition for its own profit and gain.¹² Our sensual desires override and prevent us from accepting the truth of what is real.

Hindrance No. 1: Kāmacandha ***(Sensual Desire) The Main Perpetrator***

Kāmacandha, pronounced kay-mah-chan-dah, is at the core of our craving for sensual pleasures or craving sensual satisfaction. Breaking down this Pali word reveals the Buddha's exact meaning, context and use of this word. "Kāma" means indulging in conscious thoughts about the five sense faculties; i.e. sight, smell, sound, taste and touch satisfaction. "Ichcha" (Eech-shee-chah) is desire, and "anda" (ahn-dah) refers to being blind (no comprehension). Kāmacandha becomes so strong that the mental desire causes you to completely focus on the object desired. In a very real sense, the mind loses control of itself and cannot see the difference between what is sensible or practical and what is not.

Hindrance No. 2: Vayāpāda (Ill-will) ***More Intense than Kamacchandha***

Vayāpāda ("vayā" + "pāda"): "Vaya" means destruction. "Pāda" means "moving or walking towards." Therefore, vayāpāda is moving oneself toward destruction. Vayāpāda arises in conjunction with *focused craving* for sensual satisfaction when negative craving intensity is present. Certainly, at the core of ill will are all forms of hatred. Some of the concepts related to ill-will (vayāpāda) are:

Acrimony	Animosity	Animus
Antagonism	Antipathy	Bad-blood
Bitterness	Enmity	Envy
Grudge	Hate	Hatred
Hostility	Loathing	Malice
Rancor	Resentment	Aversion
Bad-will	Blame	Despite
Spite	Dislike	Quarrelling
Arguing	Disputatious	Hard feelings
Bitterness	Malevolence	Maliciousness
No-love-lost	Objection	Spitefulness
Unfriendliness	Venomous	Splenic
Antagonistic	Belligerence	Irascible
Peevishness	Rudeness	Sarcasm
Acerbic	Virulence	Churlishness
Unkindness	Mordancy	Apathy
Uncompassionate	Aspersions	Sneering
Scornful	Disparaging	Caustic
Contemptuous	Corrosive	Critical
Mockery	Cynicism	Ridiculing
Cutting	Evil	Maligning
Viciousness	Indignity	Abhorrence
Alienation	Revenge	Vengeful
Disapproving	Detestation	Disfavor
Ignominy	Repugnance	Begrudging
Prejudice	Back-biting	Jealousy

This list is by far incomplete. We have all experienced these things in our lives. However, how adept are you at recognizing these kinds of kilesa? Does your meditation directly help you to recognize these traits and eradicate them from your life? No? Why not? Then you must ask yourself, what is the point of your meditation?



Leading Modern Sense Desire: A New Cell Phone

¹² Super-Size Me: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Super_Size_Me

Hindrance No. 3: Thinamiddha (Laziness & Lethargy)

We all know what laziness and lethargy are. Like me, I am sure lots of people indulge in the occasional lazy-Sunday afternoon. But Thinamiddha¹³ doesn't refer to the occasional bouts of laziness or lethargy. Thinamiddha is a concatenated word containing two parts. Thina (thee-nah) actually goes beyond mere mental laziness or lethargy. It encompasses the mental condition of indifference, stiff-mindedness, inflexibility, mulishness and stubbornness. In the context of the suttas, *thina* is the specific mental condition of being indifferent and disinterested in the truth about the nature of reality, and specifically in the truth contained in the Buddha's teachings. This mental state goes beyond mere incomprehension of the basic concepts of the Buddha's teachings, rather it is because of thina that one cannot grasp the Buddha Dhamma.

Combined with the Pali word *middha* (mee-dah), which means mental dullness and drowsiness, has a broader meaning depending on context. The Pali contextual meaning could be encapsulated in the phrase, "frozen mind." Middha can refer to any one of the following mental states:

Apathy	Disinterest	Dormancy
Drowsiness	Dullness	Idleness
Impassivity	Inaction	Inactivity
Languor	Laziness	Lifelessness
Listlessness	Passiveness	Sleepiness
Sloth	Slowness	Sluggishness
Slumber	Stupor	Torpidity
Inaction	Indolence	Unmindful

Therefore, thinamiddha is representative of a mental state of someone who has not been exposed to the Buddha Dhamma. The mind is in a frozen state of being unaware of the conditions that exist in the World. Learning the Buddha Dhamma has the reverse affect; doing so energizes the conscious mind. A sure sign of thinamiddha is when one gets sleepy or falls asleep during meditation, which is naturally energizing when done correctly, with purpose and meaning.

Hindrance No. 4: Uddhacca kukkuccha (Restlessness and Remorse)

This mental state is one of the more identifiable of the Five Hindrances. Many people describe being affected by a restless mind whenever they try to meditate. As you can see from the foregoing hindrances, the Pali words are very descriptive and accurate when it comes to the scope of meaning.

Uddhacca (oodh-dahtch-cha), means "high-mindedness," a person who maintains a high opinion of themselves. Not surprisingly, *uddhacca* describes the mental state of someone who is narcissistic. Kukkucca (kook-kooch-cha) is an individual's tendency to behave poorly towards others, such as:

Mistreating	Belittle	Criticize
Deride	Discredit	Disparage
Downplay	Scorn	Pan
Deprecate	Make-fun-of	Depreciate
Derogate	Diminish	Discount
Downgrade	Knock	Lower
Minimize	Poor-mouth	Rip
Slam	Shoot-down	Trivialize
Underrate	Undervalue	Bad-mouth
Embarass	Cut-to-the-quick	Dispraise
Dump-on	Pooh-pooh	Scoff-at
Put-down	Run-down	Sneer-at
Smear	Shoot-full-of-holes	Take-down
Tear-down	Underestimate	Write-off
Blame	Take-a-swipe-at	Blast
Castigate	Take-down-a-peg	Censure
Chastise	Excoriate	Chide
Condemn	Reprimand	Denounce
Carp	Blister	Clobber
Lambaste	Reprehend	Reprobate
Reprove	Come-down-on	Trash
Cut-down	Cut-to-bits	Dress-down
Denunciate	Do-a-number-on	Find-fault
Jump-on	Skin-alive	Nit-pick
Nag-at	Pick-at	Scathe

My-my-my, we certainly have a lot of ways of harming one another mentally and emotionally. This list is far from complete. Does your meditation reveal these things within you?

¹³ **Thinamiddha**: stiffness, obduracy, stolidity indifference. Together with; middha it is one of the 5 hindrances (nīvaraṇāni) Def. as cittassa akammaññatā, unwieldiness or impliability of mind (= immobility) at Cnd.290 = Ds.1156 Ds.1236 = Ne.86; as citta-gelaṇṇaṃ morbid state of mind ("psychosis") at DN-a.i.211:
<https://suttacentral.net/search?query=Thina>



The common usage of the phrase **uddhacca kukkuc** in the Pali texts describes a restless and brooding mental state. **Uddhacca** describes our own human proclivity for “high-mindedness,” which in this modern Age is linked to external things, such as our wealth, the type of car we own, the cell phone we have, the education we have, the family we come from, the university we went to, the label-clothing we wear, our “high-minded” vocabulary, the part of town we live in, the jewelry we wear, the expense of our wedding, the name-dropping we do, our exceptional body or beauty, our dental veneers, the kind of computer we have, the expense of our special pet-breed; the label on your wine bottles, our shoes or handbags, that we only shop at Whole Foods or other high-end stores. Of course, there is nothing inherently wrong with any of these things if one is in a position to easily afford them. However, when one cannot easily afford these things and places pressure on themselves and others to enrich your life, this is a problem. However, it is by far more of a problem when one uses such things in a “high-minded,” “better than others” way of thinking.

How does **kukkuc** come into play with **uddhacca**? High-mindedness can cause one to mistreat people. In-other-words, behave and act in demeaning, lowly ways that tend to demean others. When a person is drunk with power and money for example, this is **uddhacca**; high-mindedness. Whenever a person is willing to stoop to treating others poorly, even if it is only the view one holds in their minds, this is a kind of maleficence (corruption, debasement, degeneracy, depravity, immorality, evilness).

Combined, these two mental factors create a restless and scattered mind. The point of the phrase is not to specifically describe the mental effects on the mind of someone who is wealthy. Rather, it aims at identifying the mental state of someone who is high-minded, even if they are poor. The scattered mind results in an inability to focus one-pointedly during meditation as though there existed a veil blocking a true sense of right and wrong, good from bad, beneficial from unbeneficial, and reality from delusion.



Probably the most infamous example of **uddhacca kukkuc** was the very public disgrace of multi-billionaire Leona Helmsley¹⁴, known as the “Queen of

Mean,” who, during the 1980s made the statement, “We don't pay taxes; only the little people pay taxes.” She was eventually convicted and served a prison sentence for tax fraud and tax evasion.

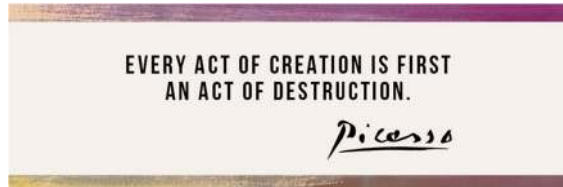
Hindrance No. 5: Vicikicchā (Skeptical doubt)

This word refers to the person who maintains a mental state of perpetual doubting. At times, even when presented with a logical truth, such as death is the opposite of life or death causes suffering, a person infected with **vicikicchā** is prone to question or doubt. Regarding death, they might respond that no one knows what death is, or if you are dead, how can you be suffering. **Vicikicchā** is the propensity to twist logic and truth to satisfy doubt, which in essence can merely be a mental mechanism to avoid taking responsibility. Also, the mind infected with this hindrance uses logic to defend their opinions and beliefs.

This is another combined Pali word, where “vi” means twisted or warped. “Ca” (pronounced “cha”) means “thoughts;” “one’s thinking.” “Icchā” means craving. When a person acts with the tendency to do or say immoral things in order to obtain something desired, one does not know or does not care about the adverse consequences of such activities.

¹⁴ Leona Helmsley: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leona_Helmsley

Now, with specific regard to the Buddha Dhamma, this is a person, that although hearing the teachings of the Buddha, avoids seeing the nature of its truth by doubting or at times uses a self-designed logic of clinging to their own views of the World. Such people prevent themselves from developing confidence in the Buddha Dhamma because they crave and desire to protect their own high-mindedness.



Such people also hide behind skepticism by claiming to “work out” whether or not the concepts of the Buddha Dhamma are correct. Sometimes this is more noticeable with academic skepticism. A common example is when a person learns of the concepts of kamma and rebirth, their doubt stems from several sources. One source is that they have become deeply immersed in religious concepts that are opposite of rebirth.

Despite the logical and scientifically proven truth that everything that exists in the Universe is subject to destruction (death) and renewal (rebirth), they maintain the position that somehow, human beings are immune. Ignorance of the truth of the nature of reality causes them to believe that human beings are special because of the intercession of a sky-god, and so are immune from the cosmological physics that defines the entire Universe.

Also common are those many people who accept a warped meaning of kamma when it serves the purpose of judging others actions, e.g., “*Well, you know what they say about karma? What goes around comes around.*” However, they do not know how to apply the workings of kamma to themselves. Having such doubts based on ignorance is also vicikicchā.

With intentional determination to learn the Four Noble Truths, vicikicchā will fade away. As a result of maintaining doubt, uncertainty and skepticism, a person yoked with this hindrance will behave stupidly, making stupid decisions because of their ignorance of the true nature of this World (*anicca*).

Anapanasati Bhavana: Breath Meditation

From the very first teaching that the Buddha gave, known as the Four Noble Truths, it was clear that the Buddha Dhamma (teachings of the Buddha) are focused on cleansing the mind; the habitual patterns of thought; the things one believes and practices. It is also clear that cleansing these things from one’s thinking (mind), was the key to real and long-lasting tranquility (equanimity). A mind cluttered with incorrect knowledge, produces impure and defiled thoughts (*citta*). Adulterated, tainted, contaminated thinking leads one to the same kind of speech and the same kinds of actions.

Type the word “Anapanasati” into any search engine. The results returned overwhelmingly indicate that this word means “Buddhist breath meditations” or “mindfulness meditation.” However, the word in the Pali texts reveals something quite different¹⁵. Breathing meditation is described in the Vedas as a method prescribed by the ancient yogis, it therefore preceded Buddha’s teaching of Ānāpāna Bhāvanā. Buddha rejected the ancient Vedic yogi practice because he determined that it could not lead one to nibbana at any level or to a permanent relief from dukkha (stress and suffering). Many suttas describe the Buddha’s teaching that states that Ānāpāna Bhāvanā could lead one to experience nibbana, and several other mental states, such as Satipaṭṭhāna¹⁶ (*sah-tee-pat-thana*).

¹⁵ Is Ānāpānasati Breath Meditation? <https://puredhamma.net/bhavana-meditation/anapanasati-not-breath-meditation/>

¹⁶ Satipaṭṭhāna: “Contemplation (meditation) in accordance with the rules of Satipaṭṭhāna, the seizing of the real essence of all objects.” <https://suttacentral.net/search?query=satipatthana> | <https://puredhamma.net/sutta-interpretations/maha-satipatthana-sutta/satipatthana-introduction/>

Many Pali words are derived from a combination of words. This format causes words that are modeled to impart specific meanings. Therefore, the meaning of Pali words is revealed by knowing the individual words. Such is the case with the word Anapanasati. At the root of this word is the word Ānāpāna. There are actually two words in Ānāpāna. The first is “āna,” and the second is “āpāna. When the word “sati” is attached to anapana, gives the word Anapanasati a more specific meaning. “Āna” means to “take in” or “taking in.” The next word, “Āpāna” means to discard or throw away. Thus “āna” combined with “āpāna” (Ānāpāna) therefore means a “taking in and a discarding of something mindfully (sati).

So, the instruction in the Anapanasati Sutta is basically to cleanse the mind; get rid of the unnecessary clutter, but also replace these things with useful things that are beneficial for cooling down one’s thinking (nibbana). Breath meditation does not mean that you get rid of all thoughts. Not all thoughts are corrupted or defiled. When you clean out your closets, attics, basements, garages or kitchen cupboards, you do not haphazardly throw everything out. Rather, you strategically get rid of things you realize that you don’t need. This is the “sati” part of Anapanasati; being mindful of what you are doing, or in the case of meditation, aware of your thinking in connection with the opinions and beliefs that support it.

One does not throw away everything or take in everything. One needs to learn how to be selective in taking in “good things” and throwing away “bad things”. That is where mindfulness comes in. That cannot be done with the breath. The difference between real Satipaṭṭhāna/anapana meditation, and simple breathing meditation awareness, is that breath meditation is temporary whereas the other is more permanent¹⁷.

In the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta the instruction given by the Buddha is “*parimukhaṃ satiṃ upaṭṭhapetvā*,” meaning that to prepare for meditation one needs to set their mind to a calm and stable state where the meditator is devoid of any thoughts or feelings of greed, hate, and ignorance. This is the purpose of breath meditation. Additionally, the meditator is to fix on a modest attitude; no feelings of superiority. The meditator must also be able to maintain a forthright and honest composure. All of this instruction is for the sole purpose of keeping the mind on the main object to facilitate a “cooling down” of one’s thoughts (nibbana).

It is important to consider that the more one cleanses their thoughts and awareness, the more the true nature of this world becomes increasingly clear. Simple intellectual knowledge or breathing meditation alone will not result in deep understanding of anicca, dukkha or anatta. What one meditates on must be put into action.

“If its root remains undamaged and strong, a tree, even if cut, will grow back. So too if latent craving is not rooted out, this suffering returns again and again.” ~Dhammapada 338

“For a person forced on by his thinking, fierce in his passion, focused on beauty, craving grows all the more. He’s the one who tightens the bond. But one who delights in the stilling of thinking, always mindful cultivating a focus on the impurities: He’s the one who will make an end, the one who will cut temptations bond.” ~Dhammapada 350

In conclusion, we can see that mere breathing meditation alone is not what is prescribed by the Buddha. If one is to make any serious and beneficial progress toward an understanding of the Buddha Dhamma, specifically the Four Noble Truths, then one would do well to examine the effectiveness of their meditation practices.

¹⁷ Ānāpānasati Eliminates Mental Stress Permanently: <https://puredhamma.net/living-dhamma/essential-buddhism/anapanasati-eliminate-mental-stress/> (See Also: Ānāpāna and Satipaṭṭhāna – Fundamentals: <https://puredhamma.net/living-dhamma/essential-buddhism/anapana-satipatthana-fundamentals/> | Prerequisites for the Satipaṭṭhāna Bhāvanā: <https://puredhamma.net/sutta-interpretations/maha-satipatthana-sutta/prerequisites-for-the-satipatthana-bhavana/>

A Valuable Lesson Learned



When I first decided to offer meditation classes to beginners, I advertised it as: “Beginner Buddhist Meditation Instruction.” I realize now that this was a mistake. It was a mistake because people came with their pre-conceived ideas of what meditation is. When I began to teach the foundations of the Buddha Dhamma as preparation for true meditation, people balked. They did not want to hear the teachings of the Buddha. They merely wanted a quiet time that provided them with a respite from their problems, their anxiety, their stress. This was a problem for me because I cannot justify merely conducting what I refer to as “entertainment meditation.”

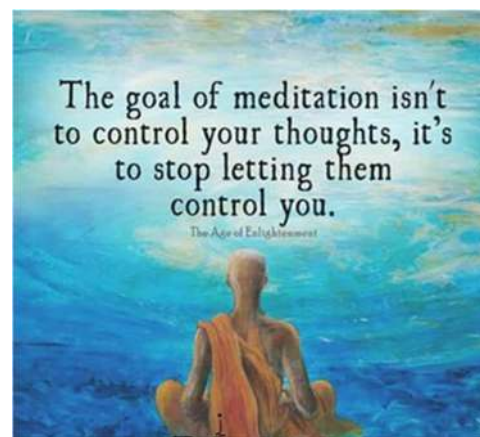
Several astute members of the meditation group pointed out that I had advertised the group as beginning meditation instruction, when in fact I should have advertised it differently by focusing on meditation as a vehicle for learning and understanding the Buddha Dhamma. Oops! I did not consider people’s ignorance and pre-conceived ideas about meditation.

Many people have come and gone, all stating that the reason for leaving was because they only came for the meditation. Several decided to attend after their yoga classes. For a few members, that understand the problem, continue to attend. For the few who remain, they enjoy hearing the Dhamma talks, along with the meditation exercises. There are times when the discussion becomes deeply immersed in the Buddha Dhamma and we talk right through the time set aside for meditation. Regardless, the Dhamma talk is still a form of meditation.

With beginning meditation, you need to know what to meditate on. This is where a knowledgeable instructor comes in. Therefore, it is helpful to think about the goal of meditation, which is to identify and remove greed, hate, and ignorance from our minds, attaining a state of a cooling off of the mind (nibbana). Therefore, it is essential that one needs to understand the fundamental concepts of Buddha Dhamma first.

For meditation to be real, and for meditation to work, one needs to keep greedy, hateful, and ignorant thoughts from arising in the mind, and not just during meditation, but permanently. The better we become at recognizing mental impurities, the more relaxed our minds become; the better equipped we become at removing our mental impurities. The mass-marketed breathing method of meditation is not correct. The correct *Ānāpānasati Bhāvanā*¹⁸ is focused on the purification of the mind as a way to achieve relief from the effects of *dosa*, *lobha* and *mōha*.

Because so many people believe that meditation must follow some pre-scripted format, they do not realize that contemplation on the Buddha Dhamma and listening to Dhamma talks is also a form of meditation. Why? The purpose of meditation is to discover the teachings of the Buddha and to learn how to apply the teachings to one’s specific life experiences. Since experiences are reality, then would it not be beneficial to understand which experiences are the cause of your suffering and stress? Being able to see (understand) the reality of our experiences is what meditation is all about.



¹⁸ Anapanasati meditation: <https://puredhamma.net/elephants-in-the-room/elephant-in-the-room-3-anapanasati/anapanasati-overview/>